

A MODERN SHYLOCK IN REAL LIFE IN NEW YORK

The Story of Teitelbaum, Adolph Teitelbaum, the Pitiless Instalment Plan Merchant of the East Side, and How He Entraps the Poor.

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CITIZENS OF
NEW YORK
ARRESTED
BY THIS MAN
IN ONE
YEAR.

Like the Shylock of Shakespeare, He Demands His Pound of Flesh, Pursuing His Victims with a Term in Ludlow Street for Debt.



Warden Pickett
On the Shylock.

The Keeper of Ludlow Street Jail Tells About Teitelbaum's Wholesale Persecutions of the Poor.

"I have seen too many of those unfortunate patrons of the heartless Teitelbaum pass by these doors for a paltry debt. They are coming here constantly, and not one in a hundred knows what the charge is. They are overcome by the suddenness of the indignity thrust upon them and cannot understand why they are under lock and key. Sometimes my blood boils in sympathy, but the law is the law, and I am the keeper."

If a bill is framed to prevent this merciless persecution I will go before the Legislature and lift my voice in its support. The present system is outrageous and smites only the paupers and destitute, who unconsciously come within its lines.

PATRICK H. PICKETT,
Warden Ludlow Street Jail.

WERE Shakespeare's Shylock, Scott's Isaac and all the money lenders and sharks of history moulded into one insatiable, merciless, implacable, gold-loving miser, the composite production would not be more unforgiving or heartless than Adolph Teitelbaum, of Greater New York, who conducts an instalment bureau under the name of the Metropolitan Household Supply Company at No. 37 Clinton street, on the East Side.

For the last two years hardly a single day has passed that Ludlow Street Jail has not had a prisoner sent there by Adolph Teitelbaum, that a few paltry dollars might be dragged from him to meet the demand set forth in the "Articles of Agreement" which the persecuted one had signed, in blind ignorance, either with a mere cross or an almost illegible hand.

And Teitelbaum, fawning on this or that ignorant housewife, or mumbling strong arguments to buy his shoddy wares or worthless bargains, wins the dull laborer over to make some purchases on the "instalment plan" after which the payments begin. But the buyer, failing once to meet the demand of the tireless collector, who is urged on by his employer, suddenly finds himself in the clutches of the law invoked by Teitelbaum and Ludlow Street Jail closes on him until the judgment is satisfied with costs, and consequent miseries.

There is more than one Teitelbaum preying upon the dulness of the unfortunate East Sider, but Adolph is master of them all in point of greed and persistency of method. By night and by day he pursues those who have so rashly placed themselves in business association with him, and in less than a year there stands to his credit on the records of East Side court rooms, seven hundred and twenty-one convictions, for whose arrest as many body executions have been issued, placed in the hands of the court marshals and served upon the defendants that the claim of Teitelbaum may be collected at the portals of Ludlow Street Jail, as it were.

His plan of procedure is strictly within the letter of a bad law, that threatens at the next session of the Legislature to be vigorously amended, but in the mean time the tyrant who holds his signed "agreement" over the heads of several thousand buyers of his cheap goods, dear ere they are paid for, conducts the heartless game of take and never give, with the law on his side.

The "Merchant of Venice."

Shylock—Aye, his breast! So says the bond; doth it not, Noble Judge? Nearest his heart, those are the very words. . . .
Portia—It is so. . . . Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge to stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.
Shylock—Is it so expensed, but what of that? 'Twere good you do so much for charity.
Shylock—I cannot find it; 'tis not on the bond.



"Why jail your debtors? If they cannot pay you, they cannot pay the fees?" you ask of him.

"If they do not pay the jail is the place," answers Teitelbaum, contracting his eyes, "where they will understand me. I do not love my debtors. It is business. A debt is a debt. I sell, they buy, I collect. Ach!"

Only a day or two ago Judge Roesch, of the Fourth Judicial District Court, declared himself in unmistakable terms, and Teitelbaum slunk away in wonderment at the reaction that began to assert itself.

When court was called he appeared in the hallway with his complaints, and two collectors who had in a great measure begun to display some of the fawning qualities of their employer. Their duty was to testify that the defendants had refused to pay and also refused to deliver the goods that had been but partly paid for. Teitelbaum, looking confidently at his brother Shylocks, some of whom had similar cases to attend to, passed up the aisle when his nine cases were called, and, bowing low to the court, made answer to the effect that he had sold the goods, that he had tried to collect the money, that the patrons had been served with a summons to appear, but had defaulted, and therefore it was his prayer that a body execution be issued and the persons be taken into custody until they had met his demands and paid his bills.

Judge Roesch heard the testimony and then said:

"This has gone far enough. Your evidence is faulty, your statements absurd. You confess that you did not see the accused sign their names, yet you claim on your oath that they executed the signatures. I have tolerated such gross misconduct as long as I consistently can, under the circumstances. It is easily in need of substantiation, and I cannot admit it when your statements are so greatly at variance with each other. It is an outrage, and you know it as well as I do. There should be a legislative enactment prohibiting imprisonment for debt for less than the sum of \$50. I respect the law and will follow it, but you must come into this court with better evidence and better witnesses. Have a care in the future, for I shall not tolerate your present methods. All your cases are dismissed. That is all."

Adolph Teitelbaum, squinted his eyes, shook unsteadily a moment, clutched his complaints to his breast, and walked out a stunned man, without one drop of blood, without his pound of flesh.

The "Merchant" of New York.

"They buy with their eyes open. I sell. They sign the agreement and I am in trade for nothing but money. Business is business, and I sell so cheap."
"But why jail your debtors? If they cannot pay you, they cannot pay the fees?" you ask of him.
"If they do not pay, the jail is the place," answers Teitelbaum, contracting his eyes, "where they will understand me. I do not love my debtors. It is business. A debt is a debt. I sell, they buy, I collect. Ach!"